

SHELTER, SUBSISTENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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412 and lose their handles, they are relegated to purely culinary tasks. The steel blades are so highly valued, however, that they continue to be used even when worn down to mere stubs. Such stubs are broken into small triangular pieces and then used as knives for whittling blowgun darts and for performing other small cutting jobs. Wooden objects made with the machete are characteristically simple but well made, although a few carved embellishments resembling reptile heads may be seen as the handles of stools and mortar boards, and as the tips of house posts and the prows of dugout canoes.

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The machete is the basic tool used in manufacturing objects from bone and the shells of large land snails, the latter material being utilized primarily for women's dance belt rattles. Bone work is limited to making needles from monkey leg bones and carving gunpowder containers of cows' horns traded from the frontier Jivaro.

Non-ferrous cutting tools are nowadays only rarely employed. A sharp-edged strip of bamboo is used to cut the umbilicus of a new-born infant; and sometimes a hardwood weed-cutting "machete" is used in garden work when there is no steel one available. Otherwise steel tools dominate the processing of materials.

The tip of a machete or machete fragment serves as a boring tool, awls being unknown. Men sew the fringes of garments and make knotless netting bags with the aid of monkey bone needles. A few possess large steel needles for the same purposes. Women use bone or steel needles, or a fragment of a blowgun dart, to pin their dresses (*tarači*) over one shoulder (see Plate 4).

Wooden mortar boards and pestles are utilized in mashing the fruit of the chonta palm to prepare a special beer, to mash peanuts, and to crush a mixture of salt and hot pepper (see Plate 7). The same wooden board is used with a crude rocker-